New Patterns of Hispanic Settlement in Rural America

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Abstract

Since 1980, the nonmetro Hispanic population in the United States has doubled and is now the most rapidly growing demographic group in rural and small-town America. By 2000, half of all nonmetro Hispanics lived outside traditional settlement areas of the Southwest. Many Hispanics in counties that have experienced rapid Hispanic growth are recent U.S. arrivals with relatively low education levels, weak English proficiency, and undocumented status. This recent settlement has increased the visibility of Hispanics in many new regions of rural America whose population has long been dominated by non-Hispanic Whites. Yet within smaller geographic areas, the level of residential separation between them increased — i.e., the two groups became less evenly distributed — during the 1990s, especially in rapidly growing counties. Hispanic settlement patterns warrant attention by policymakers because they affect the well-being of both Hispanics and rural communities themselves.

Keywords: Hispanics, Latinos, rural population, nonmetro population, new immigrant destinations, settlement patterns, residential separation, segregation, rural communities, rural diversity
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